**The Global Map of World Cultures**

Welcome to the Global Map of World Cultures. This list provides a reference point to key cultures discussed in the course and provides insight into some social nuances for each culture.

**Sources**

Axtell, R. E. (1991). Gestures: The do's and taboos of body language around the world. New York: John Wiley.

Morrison, T., Conaway, W. A., & Borden, G. A. (1994). Kiss, bow, or shake hands: How to do business in sixty countries. Holbrook, MA: Adams Media.

**Argentina**

Greetings  
Except when greeting close friends, it is traditional to shake hands briefly and nod to both men and women.  
Close male friends shake hands or embrace upon meeting; men kiss close female friends, or may engage in a light hug and "pretended kiss" on the cheek. Close female friends usually kiss each other. The full embrace (abrazo) may involve a hug, a handshake, and several pats on the shoulder, ending with another handshake.

Nonverbal Communication  
Maintaining eye contact is very important but something that North Americans may find difficult, since Argentines converse at a closer distance.  
When yawning, always cover the mouth—yawning in public is rude.

Foods  
Argentines do not usually discuss business over meals. Meals are considered social occasions.  
Avoid pouring wine, if possible. There are several complex taboos about wine pouring, which a foreigner can unknowingly violate. For example, never pour wine by grasping the neck of the bottle with the hand and rotating the hand backward so that the palm turns upward. Also, always pour with the right hand, never the left.  
To indicate you have finished eating, cross the knife and fork (tines down) in the middle of your plate.

Other  
Don't be surprised if your Argentine counterpart makes mildly derogatory comments about your wardrobe or your weight. Don't take it seriously. It is a sign that he is getting comfortable around you.  
Eating in the street or on public transportation is considered impolite.

**Brazil**

Greetings  
A good, warm handshake is the traditional greeting in Brazil . However, because Brazilians show affection easily, among male friends an embrace will be added.  
Women often kiss each other on alternating cheeks, twice if they are married, three times if single. The third kiss is supposed to indicate "good luck" for finding a spouse.

Nonverbal Communication  
To express appreciation, a Brazilian may appear to pinch his earlobe between thumb and forefinger.  
Punching the fist into a cupped hand is a vulgar gesture.  
The "OK" sign, with thumb and forefinger forming a circle, is a rude gesture, especially when the other three fingers protrude outward, away from the body. This refers to a part of the female anatomy and is therefore considered a vulgar gesture.

Foods  
Avoid cutting food with the side of your fork. Always use a knife.  
Brazilian dinners take place any time from 7:00 - 10:00 p.m. Dinner parties can easily continue until 2:00 a.m., and it is not unheard of for dinner parties to break up at late as 7:00 a.m. the next morning!

Other  
Be aware that Brazilians consider themselves "Americans" also. Do not use the phrase "in America " when referring to the United States.  
Don't eat food or chew gum while walking on the street.

**Germany**

Greetings  
Shake hands, firmly but briefly, when introduced to a German businessman. When introduced to a woman, wait to see if she extends her hand before offering to shake.  
Don't keep your left hand in your pocket while shaking hands with your right.

Nonverbal Communication  
Germans can be rather formal and reserved in public. You may not see many smiles or displays of affection on German streets. And Germans may not smile much in the course of doing business.

Foods  
When eating, use utensils. Very few foods are eaten with the hands.

Other  
It's best not to talk to someone with your hands in your pockets or while chewing gum.  
Don't be surprised if you are hushed if you cough while attending an opera, play, or concert. German audiences tend to remain extraordinarily silent.

**South Korea**

Greetings  
Korean men greet each other with a slight bow and sometimes an accompanying handshake while maintaining eye contact. Indicate respect by supporting your right forearm with your left hand during the handshake.  
Women rarely shake hands. Western men should not try to shake hands with a Korean woman.

Nonverbal Communication  
Do not put your arm around another person's shoulders. People of the same sex will often hold hands. Women will often walk together arm-in-arm.  
Physical contact is inappropriate with older people, people of the opposite sex, or relative strangers.  
The Western version of gesturing "come here" (arm and hand up, palm toward face) is used only for calling dogs. The correct way to beckon someone in Korea is to extend the arm, palm down, and make a scratching motion.

Foods  
Among the most distinctive Korean foods are kimchi, a fermented vegetable dish (typically cabbage), pulgogi (barbequed beef or pork), and bipimbop (a mixture of rice, vegetables, egg, and chili sauce).

Other  
At a restaurant one person usually pays for all. "Going Dutch" is not a common practice. There may be a good-natured argument over who will pay. Usually, the younger person pays for the elder.

**Egypt**

Greetings  
Because there are several styles of greeting in Egypt, it is safest to wait for your Egyptian counterpart to initiate the greeting, especially at a first meeting. Handshakes are fairly common, but perhaps not with as firm a grip as Americans and Europeans use.  
A more traditional Arab greeting between men involves each grasping the other's right hand, placing the left hand on the other's right shoulder, and exchanging kisses on each cheek. However, kisses are always between members of the same sex.

Nonverbal Communication  
Many Egyptian women observe the tradition of having their husbands walk slightly ahead of them.

Foods  
When dining, it is considered impolite to eat everything on your plate. Leaving some food on the plate is a symbol of abundance and will be complimentary to your host.  
Western eating habits are common, but tradition dictates that "finger foods" be eaten only with the right hand.

Other  
As a general rule, keep both feet on the ground. Never show the bottom of your foot to an Arab; this is considered offensive.

**Japan**

Greetings  
The Japanese are very aware of Western practices, and will often greet you with a handshake. Compared to a handshake in the U.S., it will often feel less strong.  
The bow is the traditional greeting. If someone bows to greet you, watch carefully. Generally, bow to the same depth as you have been bowed to.

Nonverbal Communication  
The American "OK" sign (thumb and forefinger curled in an "O") means "money" to the Japanese.  
Blowing your nose in public is considered quite rude.

Foods  
Never point your chopsticks at another person, and never stick them upright in your rice. When you are not using them, you should line them up on the chopstick rest.

Other  
If you exchange business cards with a Japanese counterpart, handle their card very carefully, and study it carefully. Don't put the card in your wallet if you plan to put your wallet in your back pocket.  
When in meetings, periods of silence may occur that may seem long and uncomfortable to the U.S. American. In Japan, such silence is perfectly acceptable and customary.  
Japanese businesses reward the group, not the individual. It is generally not a good idea to single out Japanese workers, even for positive comments.

**China**

Greetings  
Typically the Chinese nod or bow slightly when greeting another person, although handshakes are common. Wait for the Chinese to extend a hand first.  
Visitors to factories, theaters, or schools may be greeted with applause. The usual response is to applaud back.

Nonverbal Communication  
A distinctive Chinese (as well as Japanese and Korean) action is to suck air in quickly and audibly through the lips and teeth. This is a common reaction when something surprising or difficult is proposed or requested. If you get this reaction, consider modifying your request, since your Chinese counterpart may be embarrassed to say "no."  
Don't be surprised by a bit of pushing or shoving in stores or when groups board buses or trains. This is considered normal behavior and will not lead to an apology.

Foods  
Don't begin eating until the host picks up his or her chopsticks.  
When eating rice, it is customary to hold the bowl close to your mouth.  
The serving of fruit usually signals the end of the meal.

Other  
The Chinese associate all of the following gifts and colors with funerals: straw sandals, clocks, a stork or crane, handkerchiefs, and gifts or wrapping paper in which the predominant color is white, black, or blue. Avoid them.

**India**

Greetings  
In large cities, men and very Westernized Indian women will offer to shake hands with foreign men and sometimes with foreign women. Western women should not initiate handshaking with Indian men.  
The traditional Indian greeting is the namaste. To perform the namaste, hold the palms of your hands together (as if praying) below the chin, nod or bow slightly, and say namaste (nah-mas-tay).

Nonverbal Communication  
The head is considered a sacred part of the body. Therefore, don't pat youngsters on the head or touch an elder person's head.  
A somewhat unique gesture in India is to grasp one's earlobes. It expresses remorse or dishonesty, as a servant might do when scolded.  
In India, as in many places in Asia, public displays of affection are neither common nor considered proper, even among married couples.

Foods  
Remember that Hindus do not eat beef and Muslims do not eat pork.  
Don't offer another person food from your plate, as it is considered "polluted" as soon as it is placed on your plate.

Other  
Whistling in public in considered very impolite.  
As in many other cultures, pointing with one finger is considered rude. When you wish to point, use your chin, the full hand, or maybe the thumb, but not a single finger.

**Malaysia**

Greetings  
Malaysia has three major ethnic groups--Malay, Chinese, and Indian--each with its own traditions. With younger or foreign-educated Malaysians, a handshake is the most common form of greeting. The standard Malaysian handshake is more of a handclasp. It is rather limp and lasts longer than a North American handshake.

Nonverbal Communication  
Among Malays and Indians, avoid touching someone else's head, which is considered sacred. In fact, people of the opposite sex should avoid any kind of casual touching of one another.  
The foot is considered unclean. Do not move anything with your feet, do not touch anything with your feet, and do not show the soles of your feet or shoes.  
Standing tall with your hands on your hips. The "arms akimbo" position will be interpreted as an angry, aggressive posture.

Foods  
At the dinner table, it is considered rude to blow your nose or clear your throat in front of others. Go to the washroom and do these actions in private.  
Among Malays and Indians, the rule while dining is to use only the right hand. The left hand is used for bodily hygiene and is therefore considered "unclean," and should not be used for touching others or passing along gifts or other objects.

Other  
Muslim Malays consider dogs unclean. Do not give toy dogs or gifts with pictures of dogs.  
Since pork and alcohol are prohibited to observing Muslims, do not give them as gifts to other Malays. Other foods make good gifts, although meat products must be halal (the Muslim equivalent of kosher).

**Nigeria**

Greetings  
Upon greeting a Nigerian business associate, the greeting is Westernized but formal. A simple, "Good morning Mister Opala, how are you?" is accepted as proper.  
It is generally rude not to acknowledge a person when entering a room.

Nonverbal Communication  
The concept of time in Nigeria is very loose. Traffic jams in big cities such as Lagos can hold one up for several hours. Consequently, late appointments are common and usually anticipated.

Foods  
The custom of eating with one's hand is practiced in Nigeria. If there is a big festival, or even in a private home where there are foreign visitors not used to this custom, allowances are often made and silverware may be provided. However, an honest effort by the Westerner to adapt will be greatly appreciated. And as with many other cultures, it is important to use only the right hand when eating.

Other  
There are certain words that should probably not be used by a Westerner in Nigeria, such as "native," "hut," "jungle," "witchcraft," and "costume." The connotation behind these expressions tends to be that Africa is still a dark, backward continent.  
When a friend, acquaintance, and relative becomes ill, it is customary for that person to receive many, many visitors. Anyone who even remotely knows the sick person will come to visit. It is the Nigerian way to saying, "I want to know for myself how you're feeling."

**Spain**

Greetings  
A handshake is the normal greeting. You will notice that among close friends, Spanish men will add a pat on the back or a hug.

Nonverbal Communication  
The "OK" sign, with thumb and forefinger in a circle and the other fingers splayed outward, is an obscene gesture in Spain.  
The Spanish are highly aware of dress. This goes along with their concern for projecting an impression of good social position. Always select well-made conservative attire. Name brands will be noticed. Dress in subdued colors.

Foods  
Between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m., many Spaniards go out for hors d'oeuvres, called tapas. These tapas are eaten at a series of bars, and can vary from salted almonds and olives to octopus and potato omelets. Spaniards will walk from bar to bar, eating tapas, drinking sherry, and visiting friends for an hour or two. Dinner is not served until 9:00 or 10:00 p.m.

Other  
Although Spain is an overwhelmingly Catholic country, it has no official religion. However, 97 percent of Spaniards practice Catholicism.  
Bullfighting is considered an art, and should not be judged on any but Spanish terms. Derogatory remarks about bullfighting are inappropriate.

**Russia**

Greetings  
Russians usually greet a stranger by shaking hands and stating their name, rather than uttering a polite phrase such as "How are you?". Respond in the same way.  
Unless invited to do so, do not use first names. If a Russian has a professional title, use the title followed by the surname.

Nonverbal Communication  
It is considered bad manners to wear your coat and heavy boots when you enter a public building—particularly the theater. Be sure to use the cloakroom for your outer garments.  
Avoid speaking loudly or laughing loudly in public.

Foods  
In restaurants, you may have a long wait for food. Don't rely on the menus, many items listed may not be available. If he speaks English, ask the waiter what is being served that day.  
Dinners are held early; often around 6:00 p.m.

Other  
In a concert hall, whistling is not taken as a sign of approval. It means you did not like the performance.  
Another important taboo in theaters and concert halls involves entering the aisle to occupy your seat. As you enter the aisle, if you must pass in front of others, always turn and face them. Do not pass in front of seated people in a theater with your back to them.

**Turkey**

Greetings   
Shake hands firmly when greeting or being introduced to a Turkish man. It is not customary to shake hands again when leaving.

Nonverbal Communication   
The "fig" gesture, with hand clenched in a fist and the thumb protruding between the first two fingers, is a rude gesture in Turkey .  
A gesture unique to Turkey is a way of signaling that "something is good." It's done by holding the hand up, palm outward, and slowly bringing the fingers into the thumb, in a grasping motion.  
The U.S. gesture for "no" (wagging the head from side to side) is a Turkish gesture for "I don't understand." If you make this gesture in response to a question, a Turk will probably assume that you did not comprehend the question and might ask it again in another language.

Foods  
Turks use the same eating utensils that Americans use. The fork is held in the left hand and the knife in the right; the knife is used for cutting and to push food onto the fork.  
Service in Turkish restaurants is relatively quick. Except in international hotel restaurants, Turks do not usually order the entire meal at once. Instead, they order the courses one at a time, deciding what to eat only after finishing the last course.

Other  
In a family owned business, the decision maker may be quite elderly. Remember that as in many parts of the world, elders are deferred to in Turkey. Never lose your temper or shout at an elder.  
November 10 is a secular holiday remembering the death of the founder of modern Turkey, Kemal Ataturk, in 1938. It is a serious insult not to observe the moment of silence at 9:05 a.m., the time of his death.

**Sweden**

Greetings  
Although a handshake is the standard greeting, good friends (especially among the young) who see each other often do not bother to shake hands.

Nonverbal Communication  
The Swedes do not use many gestures. You should be restrained as well. Keep your voice tone modulated, Swedes are a relatively quiet people.  
Hats are commonly worn in cold weather. Men should tip their hat when passing someone they know, and remove it when speaking to a woman.

Foods  
The smorgasbord is a buffet (hot and cold) served year round, and especially during Christmas and Easter.  
The toast is more formal in Sweden than elsewhere in Northern Europe. Skoal is the Swedish "cheers."  
When dining, it's common for the male guest of honor to be seated to the left of the hostess, and the female guest of honor to the right of the host.

Other  
Scandinavians appreciate knowledge of the differences among the people of Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark .  
Queues are respected, so avoid barging into the middle of a line of waiting people.

**Mexico**

Greetings  
Men will greet each other with a handshake. Women will often pat each other on the right forearm or shoulder instead of shaking hands. If they are close, they may hug or kiss each other on the cheek.  
Be prepared for the possibility of a hug on the second or third meeting.

Nonverbal Communication  
Conversations take place at a much closer physical distance than what may be regarded as comfortable in the United States.  
If a man stands with his hands on his hips, it may suggest hostility or a challenge.  
Try to avoid visiting churches or religious sites while wearing shorts, tank tops, or cut-off shirts or shorts.

Foods  
It is customary for one person to pay the check for a group meal. This is often the oldest person in the group. It is good manners to haggle over paying the bill. If another person pays, reciprocate by inviting the person out for another meal, insisting ahead of time that this will be your treat.

Other  
The pace in business will tend to be slower than in the U.S. or Europe. Decisions may take time. Be calm and patient with delays.

**United States**

Greetings  
The standard greeting is a smile, often accompanied by a nod or a verbal greeting. In most situations, a handshake is appropriate. It is very firm, a weak handshake is less desirable.  
The greeting "How are you?" is not an inquiry about your health. The best response is a short one, such as "Fine, thanks."

Nonverbal Communication  
The standard space between you and your conversation partner should be about two feet. Many U.S. residents will be uncomfortable standing closer than that.  
Direct eye contact shows that you are sincere, although it should not be too intense.  
When sitting, U.S. citizens often look very relaxed. They may sit with the ankle of one leg on their knee or prop their feet up on chairs or desks.  
Most Americans become uncomfortable with periods of silence. Therefore in business or social situations, if a gap occurs they will quickly try to fill in with conversation.

Foods  
If you are offered food or drink, you are not obliged to accept. Also, your host may not urge you to eat, so help yourself whenever you want.  
At a fast-food restaurant, you are expected to clear your own table.

Other  
It has become a very important courtesy in the United States to ask permission of your host or hostess before smoking. Also, more and more public places such as restaurants do not allow smoking indoors of any kind.  
Eating in the street or on public transportation is considered impolite.